In The Woods Somewhere

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In The Woods Somewhere

by nbcravenstag

Summary

Abigail becomes lost in the woods after hopping the hospital fence late at night. Scared and alone, she fears she may never get out of the forest until she is found by a frighteningly large creature with oddly familiar eyes.

“Will’s my… well, I don’t really know what he and Hannibal are. They’re my guardians, I guess. They take care of me. Will like… collects stray dogs that he finds wandering around.” She shrugs. “He just picked up his seventh a couple of months ago, and you’re so… I don’t know. Nice? Domesticated? I don’t really know. He’d give you a good home though.” She shakes her head and tries not to feel self-conscious about discussing her guardian-who-shot-her-dad with a bear-sized wolf who seems much too intelligent to be a wild animal. “I bet he’d try to take you in though if I asked. How about it buddy, you want to be a house-wolf?” She reaches out and strokes a hand down its broad shoulders, then knots her fingers in the plush strands and grips tightly.

The wolf swings its big head over to look at her and Abigail’s heart stops beating.

Notes

Hello!! This is the third installment of my Rougarou AU! This takes place not too long after the last two fics. I thought it would be fun to write Abigail encountering Rougarou-Will, so here you all go! If you liked it, I'll definitely write more! I've actually been considering writing a full-length fic that could be read as a stand-alone or in order, but I haven't exactly figured out the direction I'd want to take it in yet, so we'll see! Of course if anyone has something they want to see from this AU, I'll absolutely do my best!

Anyway, I hope you guys enjoy, and I love you all!

I never should have left. Abigail tells herself for what's probably the hundredth time in the last hour since she took the path. She knows it won't do any good to berate herself, but after trekking through the underbrush of the forest in the wrong direction for what seems like a decade, she needs to be angry at *somebody.*

It's well past eleven now, and the night has grown colder since she climbed the wall hours before. She has her hands clenched into fists inside her coat pockets, but it's not doing much to protect her from the cold. Tired, hungry, frozen, and frightened, Abigail has to suppress the urge to cry. It wasn't enough that she decided a walk through to woods in the dark would be fine, she had to go and get fucking *lost* too.

Why hadn't she just gone to Hannibal's house? Or stayed in the city? But no, she just *had* to go walk in the woods where there's no light, everything looks the same, and if she's very, *very* unlucky, no one would even hear her if she screamed for help.

The night goes from bad to worst when she attempts to step over a small bush, but ends up getting her foot trapped under a loose root. She cries out in surprise and pain when she feels the snag on her shoe and her whole body goes down onto the underbrush. She scrapes her palms against the tree's rough bark when she tries to catch herself, but the angle is off and she falls to her knees in the dirt.

This time when the urge to cry hits her, she can't help it.

Clutching her wounded hands to her chest, Abigail twists her body so that she's sitting upright against the tree, then buries her face in her knees and sobs while around her the forest watches.

Can I make it until the morning? She thinks desperately. She'll be hypothermic by the time the temperature reaches its lowest at midnight and God knows what kind of animals are lurking about. Her father taught her how to hunt and defend herself against an animal attack, but it's dark and she's alone with no weapons and no means to help herself.

Hopelessness wells up inside Abigail's heart and panic begins to overtake her mind, constricting her lungs and making the ache in her fingertips and toes even worse. She wants to go home. She wants to be in Hannibal's kitchen making dinner with him or lounging about in his living room, anywhere in the world other than this dark forest where everything in the world can harm her and there will be no one to help her.

To her left is the sudden sound of rustling leaves. She lets out a gasp of horror, then quickly clamps her hand down over her mouth to silence her sobs and pushes herself back against the tree. She doesn't even want to breathe.

Seconds go by, maybe minutes, and Abigail musters up all of the courage she has, then turns to look in the direction of the noise.

Icy cold terror takes over her entire body when she sees two very clear reflective eyes staring back at her through the underbrush. Abigail can't move. Her heart is pounding so loudly that

she can hear her pulse in her ears.

The animal huffs out a breath and she sees the steam when the heat touches the frigid air. Then it steps out of the treeline and a new level of terror overtakes her.

The wolf is horrifically large with brown fur and crystal blue eyes that are fixated on her prone form barely hidden by the tree trunk. It watches her carefully, considering, maybe waiting.

Another sob rips up from Abigail's chest, much louder than she intended, and she shrinks back against the tree. She's going to die. This wolf is going to attack her and kill her because she can't fight it off. *I don't want to die. Not here. I've survived so much. Please don't let me die here.*

The wolf takes a slow, calculated step forward, never taking its eyes off of her.

"Please." She murmurs uselessly at the predator. "Please don't hurt me." Her voice breaks and tears blur her vision.

In response, the wolf lets out a soft whine, then takes another step toward her.

Abigail flinches away. "I'm not a threat to you, please, please just go away." She begs, feeling stupid for trying to reason with an animal, but unsure what else to do. She can't run now that it has eyes on her, and she certainly doesn't want to attack it and make it angry. There's nothing else she can do but sit here and hope that it doesn't hurt her.

The wolf huffs at her and continues to move forward until it's within touching distance. It doesn't give off any hostile energy the closer it gets to her, and for one second, Abigail begins to let herself hope. The wolf is incredibly large, much larger than any wolf she's ever seen before, but it certainly isn't watching her like the apex predator it could easily be. In fact, it almost looks… *concerned?*

It looms above her but does not growl or snarl when it lowers its large head to her level and its eyes flicker over her face and body. It's close enough now that she can feel the animal's warm breath on her face, but the lack of aggression is making it easier for her to handle its proximity.

I wonder…

Slowly and cautiously, Abigail lifts her hand from her lap. The wolf's eyes track her movement but it doesn't react, so she continues. "Hi." She whispers as she holds her shaking hand under the wolf's face. "Want to sniff me?"

The wolf blinks at her, but takes the offer and sniffs at her hand before pressing its face into her hand.

Abigail lets out a sound of surprised delight at the sight of the very large animal headbutting her palm to demand more pets and her fear begins to dissipate. "Hello, buddy, oh my Gosh." She exclaims breathlessly. She strokes her fingers through its surprisingly plush brown fur by

its ears and thanks every God she can think of that this animal is friendly. “You’re a gentle giant, aren’t you buddy? Look at you, you’re so sweet.” It yips at her, which initially startles her but she quickly recovers. “Are you lost too? Do you have a family somewhere?”

It snorts as a response.

Abigail laughs sadly and runs her fingers through soft fur some more. “Yeah, me either.”

The wolf’s eyes dart back to hers. It’s not a threatening look, but it’s a very intense one, and somehow achingly familiar. Abigail narrows her eyes and studies the wolf’s face closely. The wolf, in turn, doesn’t look her in the eye but allows itself to be scrutinized to her disbelief.

This creature is so… *odd.* It’s a very large wolf with very strong legs, unsettlingly sharp claws, and a jaw so large it could easily take her head off with its teeth, but yet it hasn’t. In fact, the beast has done nothing that would classify as *normal wolf behavior* since they saw each other, and she has absolutely no idea what to do with this information.

Abigail swallows hard. “What are you?” She whispers, her voice wavering with the intense emotions she’s been feeling.

The wolf meets her eyes and for a very brief second, she’s reminded of Will Graham. This beast’s eyes are somehow the very same color, and although that should scare her, it makes her feel strangely safe.

Suddenly it turns away from her and begins to walk in the opposite direction. Fear surges through her at the thought of being alone and she shifts to her knees. “Wait, don’t go!” She calls after it.

It turns back to her and Abigail is stunned to see that it’s actually watching her expectantly. It looks so human that her previous question of its identity burns deeper in her mind. Then the wolf flicks its head to the left in a clear invitation for her to follow.

“F-follow you?” She tries to guess. It feels ridiculous. This is an animal.

Then it repeats the gesture and Abigail can’t stop the laugh that comes out of her. “This can’t be real.” She mutters to herself before getting to her feet. She fixes the patient wolf with a hard stare. “You’re not leading me off to kill me right? That would be pretty mean of you.”

It breathes out heavily like it’s laughing at her, and Abigail once again feels apprehensive. Has *she* lost it? This is a wolf, not a human. So why does it appear to respond to her so intelligently? Why is it acting like it’s trying to comfort her instead of killing her? And why in the *fuck* does it look at her like *that?* Like it knows her right down to her core and cares?

A quiet bark breaks her out of her thoughts and she shakes her head to clear the fog. The wolf is watching her carefully but still waiting for her to follow it. She takes a deep breath in, lets it out slowly, then takes her first cautious steps toward the beast.

Abigail walks beside the wolf for quite a while and tries not to feel intimidated by how massive it is. She’s not tall by any means, only an inch above the national average, and the

wolf almost comes up to her ribs just on all fours. It would tower over her if it stood on its two legs.

It looks over at her when it seems to realize it's being stared at, and Abigail feels strangely sheepish. Her eyes drop to the path in front of them. "I hope you know where you're going." She says out loud for whatever reason. It's not like she has anything better to do.

It lets out a grumbled noise.

She grins incredulously. "You keep doing that like you understand what I'm saying." Then she sighs and rubs her hands over her arms to warm them. "I'm kinda sad you're a wolf and not just a really big dog. I'd call Will the second I got to the hospital."

The wolf glances at her with a blank expression.

"Will's my… well, I don't really know *what* he and Hannibal are. They're my guardians, I guess. They take care of me. Will like… collects stray dogs that he finds wandering around." She shrugs. "He just picked up his seventh a couple of months ago, and you're so… I don't know. Nice? Domesticated? I don't really know. He'd give you a good home though." She shakes her head and tries not to feel self-conscious about discussing her guardian-who-shot-her-dad with a bear-sized wolf who seems much too intelligent to be a wild animal. "I bet he'd try to take you in though if I asked. How about it buddy, you want to be a house-wolf?" She reaches out and strokes a hand down its broad shoulders, then knots her fingers in the plush strands and grips tightly.

The wolf swings its big head over to look at her and Abigail's heart stops beating. Its eyes are sparkling back at her, and there's an unmistakable look within them so filled with mirth and unbridled amusement that she stops in her tracks, releasing the animal immediately like it's burned her.

"Can…" She whispers brokenly. "Y-you keep looking at me like that. Are you… can you understand me? I—" Abigail sucks in a sharp breath as tears return to her eyes and blur her vision. The wolf whimpers and turns its body toward her, which makes her sob. "I'm not crazy. I'm *not* crazy. You can understand me, can't you?" Her breathing is coming in quick pants now as the panic begins to set in. She's lost it. She's absolutely lost it. She's as crazy as her father, if not more so.

Pressure and warmth break her out of the panic attack this time. When she opens her eyes (she hadn't even realized she closed them), she looks down to see that the wolf has moved to her side and is holding its body against her torso. Abigail laughs breathlessly and strokes the wolf between its ears. It leans into her touch and its tail swishes back and forth in a wagging motion, which causes her to laugh more until all of the panic begins to fall away.

When the sobs have turned to sniffles and she can breathe again, the wolf raises its large head to give her a look that can only be described as a *smile.*

Abigail's breath catches in her throat. "You *can* understand me." She breathes out dreamily.

The wolf huffs at her and then headbutts her in the arm in an affectionate way.

She's not crazy then. She isn't. This animal *can* understand her somehow, she hasn't lost her mind.

For the second time tonight, Abigail stares at the creature in front of her, stunned by the humanity it displays, and says: *"What are you?"*

It doesn't respond, but Abigail feels that it's heard her.

The wolf moves away from her then and she follows it without a second thought. What else is she to do after all?

The rest of their journey is silent until dim orange and yellow lights become visible through the trees and Abigail's heart begins to race.

Lights. Buildings. People. She can get help. She's going to be okay.

"Oh, thank *God!"* Abigail rushes forward until she reaches the clearing, but promptly freezes when the familiar walls of the hospital come into view. The wolf led her back to the hospital. *As if this night couldn't get any stranger.*

"How did you—" She whips around, only to find an empty path behind her with no trace of the wolf. Frightened and confused, she jogs back into the forest and spins around to try to spot the creature, but it has completely disappeared. She looks down at her clothes to see strands of fur stuck inside the fabric and she releases a trembling breath. She wasn't hallucinating then, not if there is fur on her. The wolf was— *is* —real.

Abigail looks into the darkness of the forest one last time. "Thank you." She calls quietly, hoping that the wolf can hear her. Then she turns on her heel and makes her way to the hospital, the thoughts of *shower, food,* and *bed* propelling her every step.

"...and for you to go into the woods by yourself is so *reckless,* Abigail! Late at night, no phone, miles of forests, you don't live in Minnesota anymore, Abigail, you don't know this area! You cannot just wander off!"

Abigail keeps her shameful gaze on the table in front of her. Dr. Bloom has been chewing her out for the past few minutes, and although it started out as a calm talking-to, her psychiatrist's voice has slowly climbed in volume.

"Alana, yelling at her isn't going to solve anything," Will grumbles, and she feels a wave of gratitude towards him.

"I agree with Will." Hannibal's voice comes through Will's phone that's sitting on the table. He was, apparently, swamped with patients today, but managed to set aside time to be in on Abigail's metaphorical grounding.

Dr. Bloom sighs in frustration. "You're right, I'm sorry, Abigail."

Abigail looks up and gives her a small smile. “I’m sorry, Dr. Bloom. I really, really am sorry. Sometimes it just… gets to be too much in here and I need to get out so that I can think.” She doesn’t have to fake the tremor in her voice. She always gets emotional when she thinks about how trapped she feels here.

Alana’s gaze softens. “I know, Abigail, but you can’t do this again. You’re here for your own safety.”

Mine or everyone else’s? She thinks bitterly.

Her psychiatrist sighs again, quieter and less forceful than before, and excuses herself from the room. “I’m going to call Jack and let him know that everything is… okay.” She says as she leaves, then shuts the door behind her and leaves her alone with her guardians.

“Dr. Bloom has your best interests at heart, Abigail. Truly.” Hannibal says.

She nods even though he can’t see her. “I just… need to get away sometimes.” She repeats flatly.

“You are used to a certain level of freedom, and now you don’t have that for reasons outside of your control.” Hannibal replies.

Will nods in agreement. “It makes sense that you’re feeling trapped here, Abigail. But you can’t go running off into the woods late at night by yourself.”

“But, I wasn’t.” She blurts out suddenly, unable to stop herself.

Will narrows his eyes, but it’s Hannibal who speaks first: *“You were not alone last night?”*

Shit. Abigail bites at her lip anxiously. She wasn’t intending on telling anyone about the strange wolf she met during her getaway, but as always, she finds herself unable to keep her mouth shut around these two. She takes a deep breath. “Last night, when I was walking, I… I got kinda lost. Like *really* lost. It was dark, I couldn’t see, so I just kept walking and hoping that I’d find the road. I tripped and scraped my hands and when I was down I…” She swallows hard. Her hands are shaking now and the small scratches on her palms are itching as she recalls the hopelessness she felt before the wolf found her.

“Abigail?” Will utters.

She nods to acknowledge him then clears her throat. “There was a wolf in the woods. And it was huge, but it… it came right up to me and… I don’t know, I started talking to it because I was scared or whatever and it acted like, like it could understand me. Like it heard me.” She risks glancing at Will to see his reaction, but there isn’t one. His face is stony and blank, but he’s listening to her. He doesn’t look frightened for her, or *of* her. He’s listening to her like he always does whenever she speaks, keeping his eyes somewhere over her shoulder. “I know that sounds crazy, but it had me follow it and it actually helped me get back here. I swear, I’m telling the truth.” She sounds a bit desperate now with how much she wants them to believe her. If *they* start thinking she’s lost it, she has no clue what she’ll do.

Hannibal speaks first. *"We believe you, Abigail. Animals are intelligent; they are often attuned to human emotions and reactions."*

"Especially canines." Will adds.

Abigail relaxes in her seat. "You promise you believe me? You're not just patronizing me?"

"Have either of us ever patronized you?" Hannibal replies, making her feel slightly guilty.

"No." She mumbles. "I just… I know how crazy it sounds."

Will chuckles. "Dr. Lecter is a psychiatrist and I catch serial killers by learning how they think. We both make our living on 'crazy'."

"Yeah, I guess you're right." She agrees, feeling the weight lift from her shoulders. She smiles gratefully up at Will. "Thanks."

"We are here to support you Abigail, whatever you may need, we will provide." Hannibal assures her gently. *"Now, unfortunately, my next patient is waiting and I must go, but perhaps I can convince Dr. Bloom to allow you out for dinner this week. I would be happy to cook for you again."*

"Or, we'll just sneak you out ourselves." Will deadpans.

Abigail laughs. "Sounds good. Thank you, Hannibal."

"Thanks, Dr. Lecter."

"Goodbye, Abigail. Will, I shall see you soon." Hannibal's voice is soft and warm at the end when saying goodbye to Will, and Abigail smiles to herself. They haven't explicitly said that they're in a relationship, but Abigail has seen how in the last month their shared glances have begun to last a little longer than normal, their smiles when the other isn't looking.... It's kind of cute if she's honest. Of course, it's a secret to keep up appearances, so she won't call them out on it in a public place. Maybe she'll ask at dinner.

The line goes dead and Will slips the phone into his pocket with a sigh. Abigail gives him a knowing smile. "You have therapy today too?"

He rolls his eyes dramatically to the ceiling and at the sound of her laughter, Will smiles back at her. He always looks happy when she smiles, something that warms her heart the more she thinks about it.

Abigail was weary of Will at the beginning of their relationship for more than one reason. It had been hard to look at him and not think of the sound her father's body made when it hit the counters beside her or the sound of the ten gunshots one after another, or the way she woke up knowing that everything she ever knew was gone. Freddie Lounds in her head certainly hadn't helped either.

It's not so hard to look at him now. If she's being honest with herself, she's actually very fond of him. It feels like a betrayal to her father to be so connected to the man who killed him in

the first place, but Will saved her life. Twice, though she hadn't been conscious for Eldon Stamments attempt on her life. But Will had saved her then too, holding the killer at gunpoint while he protected her.

A swarm of emotions begins to swirl around in Abigail's heart as she realizes what she's been blind to this whole time. Her father loved her too much to keep her alive, but Will's love for her is different. He loves her and wants to keep her safe. He wants her happy.

"Abigail?"

She blinks at the sound of her name and blushes when she realizes she's been staring at him. "Sorry." She says, then clears her throat. "I'm tired. It's… been a long day."

"And it's only twelve-thirty." Will drawls back sympathetically. "You should get some rest. You got in late."

Abigail nods and gets up out of her chair. Will has grabbed his jacket and is pulling it over his shoulders, and she feels a random burst of anxiety at the idea of being left alone again. He hugs her tightly before he moves towards the door, but the moment his hand touches the handle, she finds herself wanting him to stay. "Will?" She calls.

Will turns to her and he looks slightly alarmed at her sudden urgency. "What's wrong?"

She quickly realizes she has no idea what she wants to say to him, but now that she's initiated it, she can't just take it back. Without anything else to say, she bites her lip nervously before saying: "You *do* believe me, right? About the wolf?"

Will hesitates for a second, then holds his hand out for her, which she takes. He pulls her close, then leans down to whisper in her ear. "How could I not believe you?"

Confused, she turns to ask him what he means, but she freezes.

His face is so close that she can see the crystal blue of his irises clearer than ever before. They're bright and sparkling and so, *so* like the eyes of the wolf who came to her when she was crying and helped her back to safety. But it's more than that, it's…

Abigail's heart skips and her jaw drops to the floor. Now that she sees it so clearly, it's appalling that she didn't see it sooner, but someway, somehow, the impossible is real, and she isn't crazy. The wolf's eyes and Will Graham's eyes are not just similar. They are the same.

Will grins at her and her eyes briefly flash to his pointed teeth. Then, he winks at her, turns, and leaves the room.

Abigail Hobbs is left standing alone with her jaw hanging open, her heart pounding, and her mind reeling and for several seconds, she can't seem to move.

In her mind, she pictures the wolf she met with Will's eyes, and dark brown fur… the exact same color as his hair. *Oh.* Oh. *Oh shit.*

It… *He,* whatever, came to her when she was lost. She was alone, and obviously the hospital called both Hannibal and Will the moment they figured out she was gone. It was kind to her specifically, comforted her while she cried and doubted her sanity, and brought her back to safety before she froze to death or became some other animal's prey. When she expressed fear towards the wolf, it seemed incredibly distressed by it and tried to make her feel less afraid. It wanted to protect her. She trusted it almost instantly, despite it being a wild animal, and it tried to make her feel safe. It protected her.

Just like Will.

Holy *shit.*

Suddenly, for maybe no reason at all, Abigail starts laughing. She laughs and laughs until there are tears in her eyes and her stomach hurts and she has to cover her mouth to stifle the giggles. It's absurd. It's impossible.

"No way." She manages to wheeze out eventually as she falls face-first down on her bed and buries her face in the pillow. "No. Fucking. Way."

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